

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L THESSALONIKI 0137

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, GR, US

SUBJECT: NORTHERN GREEK REACTION TO US-TURKISH DEFENSE
COOPERATION AGREEMENT

1. SUMMARY: AFTER INITIAL FLAP, PUBLIC REACTION IN NORTHERN GREECE TO US-TURKISH DCA HAS SETTLED DOWN TO PROMINENT BUT RELATIVELY FACTUAL FRONT PAGE COVERAGE OF GOG STATEMENTS AND DIPLOMATIC CONSULTATIONS ON SUBJECT BETWEEN USG AND GOG. THERE HAVE BEEN NO INCIDENTS OR DEMONSTRATIONS THUS FAR, ALTHOUGH SMALL BUT VOCAL CYPRIOT STUDENT BODY AT THESSALONIKI IS ALWAYS POTENTIAL SOURCE OF TROUBLE. NEVERTHELESS, DESPITE ABSENCE OF STRONG, SUSTAINED, PUBLIC REACTION HERE, US-TURKISH-DCA SEEMS TO HAVE ACCENTUATED A COUPLE OF MORE FUNDAMENTAL GREEK CONCERNS, NAMELY THE DESIRE FOR US GUARANTEES IN THE EVENT TURKEY EMBARKS ON FURTHER ADVENTURES IN THE AEGEAN AND WORRY OVER JUST HOW MUCH MORE BELT-TIGHTENING GREECE WILL HAVE TO UNDERTAKE IN ORDER TO MAKE UP FOR TURKEY'S NEW MILITARY ACQUISITIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. PUBLIC OPINION WAS CAUGHT UNPREPARED FOR ANNOUNCEMENT OF US-TURKISH DCA AND INITIAL PUBLIC REACTION WAS THEREFORE CONFUSED AND EXAGGERATED. OPINION TENDED TO FOCUS ON OVERALL SUM INVOLVED IN AGREEMENT, DRAWING CONFIDENTIAL

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LITTLE OR NO DISTINCTION BETWEEN GRANTS, LOANS OR TIME-FRAME INVOLVED; AND FEELING WAS ALMOST UNIVERSAL THAT AGREEMENT SEVERELY AFFECTED MILITARY BALANCE IN THE AEGEAN. IN THE INITIAL STAGES THERE WAS ALSO SOME

LOOSE WAR TALK AND AN ATTENDANT FOCUS ON GREEK WAR PREPAREDNESS. COONY HAPPENED TO BE TRAVELLING IN WESTERN THRACE JUST AFTER DCA ANNOUNCED. HE WAS RECEIVED BY GREEK OFFICIALS IN A CONSISTENTLY CORDIAL WAY AND NEW AGREEMENT, WHEN RAISED BY THESE OFFICIALS, WAS ALWAYS IN CONTEXT OF GREECE'S READINESS FOR WAR. I ENCOUNTERED SIMILAR REACTION AT A THESSALONIKI ROTARY MEETING APRIL 1 WHERE ONE SPEAKER DREW VIGOROUS APPLAUSE WHEN HE COMMENTED THAT "ALL OF GREECE IS NOW THE EVROS", REFERRING TO THE PREFECTURE BORDERING TURKEY IN THRACE.

3. FROM APRIL 1 OR 2 ONWARDS, THESE KINDS OF REACTIONS SEEMED TO SUBSIDE AS THE GOG STEPPED IN TO BRING PUBLIC OPINION UNDER CONTROL AND PUBLICIZED EXCHANGES WITH WASHINGTON TO MAKE GREECE'S CONCERNS KNOWN. PRESS COVERAGE OF DCA SINCE THAT TIME HAS TO BE HEAVY, BUT RELATIVELY FACTUAL. IN ADDITION TO REPORTING GOG STATEMENTS, DEMARCHES TO EC COUNTRIES AND MEETINGS BETWEEN ALEXANDRAKIS AND THE SECRETARY, LOCAL PRESS HAS GIVEN FULL AND FAIR COVERAGE TO FUNSETH'S STATEMENT THAT MILITARY BALANCE HAS NOT BEEN UPSET AND HAS PRINTED FULL TEXT OF PRESIDENT FORD'S SPEECH TO AHEPANS.

4. THESSALONIKI'S STUDENT BODY, WHICH COUNTING HIGH SCHOOLS, ADDS UP TO ABOUT 10 PERCENT OF THE POPULATION HERE, HAS THUS FAR REMAINED CALM. UNIVERSITY STUDENTS HAVE JUST COMPLETED A THREE-DAY STRIKE FOR INTERNAL REASONS COMPLETELY UNRELATED TO DCA; AND A DEMONSTRATION OF ABOUT 3,000 UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ON APRIL 8 WAS CARRIED OUT WITHOUT INCIDENT. THERE IS, HOWEVER, A SMALL BUT VOCAL GROUP OF CYPRIOT STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY WHO ALWAYS REMAIN A POTENTIAL SOURCE OF TROUBLE.

5. THUS, THE OUTWARD SITUATION HERE IS CALM; BUT DESPITE THIS CALM, US-TURKISH DCA HAS ACCENTED A COUPLE CONFIDENTIAL

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OF UNDERLYING CONCERNS WHICH HAVE BEEN EXPRESSED TO US FAIRLY FREQUENTLY AND WHICH ARE LIKELY TO PERSIST FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. THE FIRST, IS THE QUESTION OF US GUARANTEES IN THE EVENT OF HOSTILITIES IN THE AEGEAN. THERE IS LITTLE QUESTION THAT OUR MORE RESPONSIBLE CONTACTS HERE SEE THE AEGEAN, AND NOT CYPRUS, AS THE MOST LIKELY SOURCE OF FUTURE CONFLICT BETWEEN GREECE AND TURKEY, SHOULD A CONFLICT OCCUR. NEWS OF THE US-TURKISH AGREEMENT HAS REVIVED OR AGGRAVATED THEIR FEARS OF JUST WHERE WE WOULD STAND SHOULD TURKEY EMBARK ON AN AEGEAN ADVENTURE. MINISTER OF NORTHERN GREECE MARTIS HIT AT THIS VERY POINT IN APRIL 9 MEETING WITH ME ON ANOTHER MATTER WHEN HE SAID THAT HE WOULD HAVE HAD NO OBJECTION

TO OUR AGREEMENT WITH TURKS HAD IT BEEN ACCOMPANIED BY
A STATEMENT TO THE EFFECT THAT BASES AND EQUIPMENT IN
QUESTION WOULD NOT BE USED AGAINST GREECE.

6. SECOND LOCAL PREOCCUPATION, WHICH IS PERHAPS EVEN
MORE WIDESPREAD, IS JUST EXACTLY HOW MUCH IS DCA
GOING TO COST GREECE? GREEKS WE TALK TO ARE CONVINCED
(YOU MIGHT EVEN SAY DETERMINED) THAT GOG IS GOING
TO SPEND WHATEVER IS NECESSARY TO REDRESS MILITARY
IMBALANCE WHICH IS PERCEIVED TO HAVE BEEN CREATED BY
DCA. BUT THIS PROVOKES WORRY ABOUT FURTHER BELT-TIGHTENING
AND FURTHER LOSS OF INVESTOR CONFIDENCE IN WHAT IS
ALREADY NOT A VERY BRIGHT ECONOMIC PICTURE. THUS THE REAL
LOCAL DISAPPOINTMENT OF THE DCA SEEMS TO BE THAT IT
HAS FOCUSSED PEOPLE HERE ONCE AGAIN ON THE COUNTRY'S
EXTERNAL AND DEFENSE PROBLEMS, AND AWAY FROM ECONOMIC
AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ON WHICH PEOPLE WOULD SO MUCH
LIKE TO BE ABLE TO CONCENTRATE.
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